



MRAA Educational Foundation

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Melissa Danko, Director of Marine Trades Association of NJ, Named 2015 Darlene Briggs Woman of the Year

ORLANDO, FL — Melissa Danko, executive director of the [Marine Trades Association of New Jersey](#), has been named the 2015 Darlene Briggs Woman of the Year. Melissa was presented with the award, one of the marine industry's most prestigious, during a Wednesday morning awards breakfast taking place in conjunction with the annual [Marine Dealer Conference & Expo](#).

The Darlene Briggs Woman of the Year Award recognizes outstanding female leaders who demonstrate leadership and commitment to the boating business. The award was established in 1987 in honor of Darlene Briggs of Wayzata Marine in Wayzata, MN, who was the first retail marine saleswoman in Minnesota and the first female member of her state's marine trades association.

"I am incredibly honored for this recognition and especially to be among such an outstanding group of women that have demonstrated true leadership and an untiring dedication to this industry," Danko said. "I am fortunate for all of the support I have received and the many people I have met who are truly passionate about boating. It has given me an even deeper appreciation for time spent on the water and the drive to work even harder to make a positive difference."

As the leader of New Jersey's largest boating association, Melissa manages government relations, has produced 12 boat shows and handles all public relations. Additionally, Melissa played an instrumental role in helping New Jersey's marinas and boat dealers recover from the aftereffects of Hurricane Sandy—helping usher through emergency variances to quicken rebuilding, meeting regularly with the governor's office and launching a 501c3 to handle donations from across the globe.

Melissa serves as an active member of the NJ Clean Vessel Act Steering Committee, the I BOAT NJ Program Selection Committee, the Barnegat Bay Partnership Advisory Committee, the New Jersey Clean Marina Program Steering Committee, the Monmouth Ocean Development Council Energy and Environment Committee and the NJ Sea Grant Advisory Board. She also co-chairs the National Marine Trades Council, is a member of the Recreational Boating Leadership Council and served as chair of the Advisory Council of Marine Associations. Other current and past billets have included secretary of the board of directors for the Marine Environmental Education Foundation (MEEF) and serving on the review board for the Division of Travel and Tourism Cooperative Marketing Grant Program. She also sits on the Marine Industry Enhancement Steering Committee.

Margaret Podlich, president of the Boat Owners Association of the United States (BoatUS) and the 2014 recipient of the Darlene Briggs Award, flew to Orlando this week to present Melissa with this year's honor. The two women have known each other for many years, and Margaret stressed her friend's relentless drive and selfless service during times of crisis have set an example for the marine industry.

Past recipients of the Darlene Briggs Award include: Rallee Chupich of Gordy's Lakefront Marine; Debbie Meigs of Cobalt Boats; Jewell "Julie" Crowe of Crowe Marine; Barbara Woodard of Woodard Marine; Nancy Smith of Colorado Boat Center; Ann Baldree of Marine Products Corp.; Marcia Kull of Volvo Penta; Joan Maxwell of Regulator Marine Inc.; Kris Carroll of Grady-White Boats; Lynn Fiorenzano of Silver Spring Marine; and Maureen Dickson of Cap Sante Marine.

About MRAA Educational Foundation

As part of its mission to create a strong and healthy boating industry, the Marine Retailers Association of the Americas is committed to offering training, education and professional development opportunities to its members and the entire marine dealer community. In 2004, the association launched the MRAA Educational Foundation, a not-for-profit 501(c) 3 corporation, to provide financial support for education, training and professional development in the recreational marine trades. For more information, visit MRAA.com/foundation.

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